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Clayton, John Middleton

MR. CLAYTON, OF DELAWARE,

DELIVERED AT THE

WHIG MASS MEETING HELD IN WILMINGTON

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SPEECH.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: The chief object I have in view, in this day addressing you, is to call back your attention, and that of the country at large, from the many distracting topics which now agitate the public mind, to the greatest of all the issues involved in the Presidential election. The great question to be decided by that election is a question of BREAD—a question whether we shall abandon the whole principle of protection extended to the laboring classes of this country by the tariff act of 1842, and adopt, in lieu of it, a tariff discriminating *for* revenue and *against* protection; a question whether we shall go back, by our own voluntary act, to that state of colonial vassalage which existed in this country while England held us in subjection, and her statesmen boasted that they would not permit us to manufacture a hobnail for ourselves; a question whether we shall now surrender to England one of the most essential blessings resulting from that independence for which the Whigs of the Revolution successfully contended. To every reflecting mind it must be apparent that but few subjects can be decided to the satisfaction of a majority of the people, at a single election; and it is the old trick of designing politicians to escape defeat upon subjects in controversy, vitally affecting the country, by multiplying the issues to be decided, distracting the attention of the people, and dividing the majority on the dreaded questions by others of inferior importance. These are the tricks of all the enemies of Whig principles of the present day. Those gentlemen are well aware that a vast majority of the freemen of this country is decidedly hostile to the modern free trade doctrines, and as decidedly friendly to the Whig tariff of 1842, embracing the Whig principle of protection to home labor. With their new Democratic doctrine of *free trade*, all the leaders among them are conscious that they cannot go to trial before the country without incurring inevitable defeat. Within the past year the friends of the protective policy have, every where, routed their opponents when this question has been raised in the elections. Our friends have unfrocked the partisans and advocates of British interests in this nation. They have torn the masks from the faces of those who prefer English to American labor. The sheep-skins have been stripped from their backs, and the wolves now stand out in their naked deformity. To ensure our triumph in this great question, our friends have at last adopted a determination, upon which our welfare eminently depends, to reject with scorn alliance with, or assistance from, all *cow-boys*, and such as pretend to occupy a neutral position between the contending parties on this question. This is a subject upon which the American people can no longer be deceived by pretended friends or by open enemies. And, at this moment, you see the foes of the American system, conscious of their approaching destiny, if the true issue shall be submitted to the people, are, *every where*, endeavoring to direct public attention from it to other subjects, presented for the purpose of exciting popular feeling. Let us guard against the wiles of our adversaries. Our situation, at this time, may be compared to that of a large family about to emigrate to the West. We have one wagon belonging to our concern, with an excellent team attached to it. We can carry in it all that is really necessary for our safety and our happiness. But we cannot carry every thing which the caprice or fancy of every member of the family may induce him to throw into it. If we suffer every one to pile in, among our necessities of life, all the trumpery which he may have purchased to carry with him, we shall soon find that there is not room enough for a hundredth part of it, and that *one team is utterly unable to haul it*. In this state of things, the only course left us, as sensible men, is to restrict the freight in the wagon to such things necessary to our safety and comfort as we can

certainly transport. But we will leave every one, who thinks he has the means of transportation, independently of us, to lug along what he pleases; and we will promise not to fall out by the way or quarrel with any friend who may choose to go the journey with us, because he thinks proper to load himself down with articles which we are unable or unwilling to carry. The wagon and the whole cavalcade are now before me, about to start for the West. Henry Clay, the driver, knows the road well, and by his side sits Theodore Frelinghuysen, who is a good guide and experienced traveller himself. Inside of the wagon I see the *proceeds of the sales of the public lands, with duties laid for protection to home labor, a sound currency, an economical administration of the Government*, and divers other good articles, necessary for our safety and prosperity. But *there goes* a fellow behind, driving an unbroken colt in a cart of his own, filled up with *Texas bonds and Texas land scrip*. As he wishes to go along with us, we shall not dispute with him about his freight, though I think he will not drive his cart over the mountains this year! There comes another man, tugging in the rear with a wheelbarrow, loaded down with two hundred millions of *Government scrip, to pay off the State debts*. He is a good fellow in the main, and decidedly in favor of our taking along every article in the wagon, but will insist on his peculiar notion that these State debts must go in company with us; and while he works on his own hook, at his own barrow, I shall never quarrel with him or attempt to drive him back; though, if I must express my opinion, I think his freight will be swamped among the fens of Salt river. There comes another fellow, with horses attached to a cumbrous machine, moving on skids, outside of which you may see the protruding muzzles of a whole battery of cannon, and the inside of which is filled with ammunition, guns, drums, and trumpets, and all the paraphernalia of *war*. That fellow is full of fight, and wants to go to war with either Mexico or England, or some body else, he is not very particular with whom. He wished to put all that freight inside of our wagon; but when we satisfied him we had not room for the fiftieth part of it, he agreed to bring it himself, with his own force, and I am not willing to drive him back, or quarrel with him about his whims; for although he, like the others, has his peculiar notions, yet he, as well as they, is in favor of our carrying every article we have in our wagon, and desires to accompany us as far as he can to defend and protect it. Yonder comes another fellow, tottering under the weight of a knapsack, filled with treatises on *polemical divinity* and a thousand *sectarian controversies*. He ardently implored us to give room in the wagon for all that luggage; but he was assured that if one-half his tracts should be read on the road, instead of proceeding in harmony together, there would be a general fight among the whole company; after which, when Catholic and Protestant had pommelled each other soundly, the company would be separated into religious factions, and would never reach their place of destination. He was informed, then, if he would take along his knapsack, he must bear its weight, and keep its contents to himself, as the only tracts allowed to be carried in the wagon, or disseminated on the march, are those which inculcate *religious toleration*, in its widest and most liberal sense, and breathe no other spirit than peace on earth, and good will among *all men, of all sects, classes, and denominations*.

I can see, also, (let me add,) a rival train, with another wagon, behind all these, toiling hard to overtake ours, and bound for the same country, where they mean to settle, as squatters, for four years to come, if they can reach it before us. This wagon is a heavy lumbering vehicle, being but a clumsy attempt to imitate a celebrated carriage which came into fashion about the year 1800. The horses are old political hacks, many of them being spavined and wind-broken, and most of them sorely distressed with the *thumps*, a disease contracted by them on a long journey up Salt river four years ago. Inside of this wagon you may see ponderous safes and chests of iron, upon which the brazen capitals are plainly legible, the "SUB-TREASURY SEPARATES THE GOVERNMENT FROM THE BANKS, AND THE PEOPLE FROM THEIR OWN MONEY." On many of these

massive chests we read, "*Hard money for the office holders and bank rags for other people.*" On the top of all these they seem to have piled Ossa on Pelion, as if they designed to put all Texas upon wheels, including parts of the Mexican States of *Santa Fe, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas*, the whole crowned with the *Texian debt* of untold millions; by the side of which, on another package, you may read "*No assumption of our own State debts by our own Government.*" But the heaviest weight of all presses on the driver's box, where you may see James K. Polk, of Tennessee, holding his nags, four in hand, while George M. Dallas, sitting by his side, vainly plies a hickory goad to the excoriated flanks of the jaded animals. The driver sits on a cushion of enormous weight, labelled "*Free Trade.*" Every part of this vehicle is of foreign manufacture. The very wood of which it is made is of foreign growth; even the horse shoes were made by English blacksmiths; the harness is all manufactured out of English leather, by English harness-makers; all the wheel tires, the axletrees, and even the bridle bits, were imported from Liverpool. No American laborer, whether native or naturalized, was allowed to drive a nail into this wagon. Strapped up in the boot behind you may see a *broken treaty with Mexico*, covered over with that "black flag," which Mr. Butler, in the last Baltimore Convention, predicted would prove the funeral pall of a certain concern, whenever it should abandon the principle *that a majority should govern*. A band of discarded office holders and office hunters surround the wagon, shouting, at the top of their lungs, for "*Free Trade and Texas!*" "*Hard Money and James K. Polk!*" There is a little fellow, the editor of a paltry newspaper, blowing a penny whistle, labelled "*Down with all Corporations,*" while another of the same profession grinds a hurdy-gurdy to the old tune of "*Bargain and Corruption,*" and the "*Murdered Coalition.*" Near these is another of the same trade, riding on a donkey, while he drums on the dead hide of the *Bank of the United States*. Behind these comes off a *concerto*, in which you may hear the praises of the *Harmonious Democracy* chanted, amidst every variety of sound, from the twanging of a jewsharp to the thrumming of a banjo. Whether this assemblage shall ever proceed further on their journey than that Serbonian bog which lies near the sources of Salt river, I leave others to conjecture. Pharaoh pursued the Israelites till he was swallowed in the Red sea. I feel too good natured just now to foretell the destiny of James K. Polk and his followers.

But, jesting apart, let me return, in all sober seriousness, to the true question, as I have already stated it—*protection or no protection* for the country, *bread or no bread* for the laborer. It is no part of my purpose to discuss that question at length. To enable others to understand it, I have only to refer them to the last article in the March number of Blackwood's Magazine. We may there learn how Englishmen reason among themselves, when discoursing on the follies of the visionary doctrine of free trade; and we may also learn from it how much credit we should attach to articles of a contrary import, written by Englishmen for the American market. English periodicals, written for the purpose of being read by American citizens, have done more injury to the cause of the American laborer than any equal number of publications on the same subject which have appeared in our country.

In connexion with this subject, my fellow-citizens, let me say, that there are not wanting in the ranks of our opponents men who have been bold enough to charge Henry Clay and Theodore Frelinghuysen, the chosen champions of Whig principles, with having abandoned the protective policy by their votes for the compromise act of the 2d of March, 1833. It is my duty to defend these, my old associates in the public councils, against so unjust an accusation; and that duty becomes peculiarly imperative upon me, when inquiries are constantly addressed to me, as they have been of late, in regard to the true character of the votes which they gave on that memorable occasion. I cannot answer all these inquiries *by letter*. I will, therefore, this day attempt to answer them here; for I see

"A chief's among us takin' notes,
And, faith, he'll prent 'em;"

and I have reason to hope that his report of what I am about to say may reach those who have addressed these inquiries to me.

I was in the Senate at the time of the passage of the compromise act, was a member of the committee which reported it, and had the best possible opportunity of knowing the motives and objects of Mr. Clay in the introduction and passage of that measure. His aim was not only to prevent a civil war, and the dissolution of the Union, but to *save the protective policy*. I am convinced that, but for the passage of that act, the protective system would have been substantially repealed more than ten years ago, and every manufacture in the country dependent upon it stricken down.

I know that nothing is more common than for us to hear certain individuals, who are utterly ignorant of the real circumstances which existed in the early part of the year 1833, in a spirit of idle bravado, boasting how bravely *they* would have defied the threats of the Nullifiers, how resolute they would have proved themselves had the opportunity been offered them, in hanging up all the leaders of that faction, and how rejoiced they would have been in administering, through the swiftly willing agency of General Jackson, a salutary castigation to what they term "the imbecile arrogance and bullying of South Carolina." These and similar remarks are generally made for the purpose of introducing a condemnation of Mr. Clay for his agency in the passage of the compromise act, which they say was a sacrifice of the protective principle, to prevent a war with the Nullifiers. Without doubting the courage or the sincerity of those who thus often boast of the superior firmness and more manly bearing which they would have exhibited at that crisis, I will endeavor briefly to show you that these gentlemen are ignorant both of the effect and meaning of the act, as well as of the objects sought to be secured by its author.

It is quite a common error, that the act itself proposes a *horizontal tariff* of 20 per cent. on all articles of importation, as the minimum rate of duties, and the final resting place at which the reduction of duties proposed by the act shall cease, and stand unchanged and unchangeable forever. At this day, gentlemen of intelligence, professing to understand and discuss the legal effect of this act, often speak of it as a law the great object of which was, by a system of gradual diminution, to reduce the duties, as they stood under the act of 1832, to a universal levy of 20 per cent. at the expiration of nine years and four months. In other words, they regard the compromise act as fixing one rate for all dutiable articles from and after the 30th of June, 1842, that rate being 20 per cent. *ad valorem*; and as containing certain binding stipulations or pledges on the part of the authors of that law, that no higher rate of duty should ever, after that day, be collected by the General Government. This supposition, preposterous as it is, you have doubtless observed, is an opinion quite commonly expressed, and that, too, not unfrequently by grave legislators on the floors of Congress. That the enemies of Mr. Clay should have so expressed themselves is matter to be regretted; but when the friends of the tariff, and the very men who profess the utmost confidence in the rectitude and consistency of that great statesman, fall into the same error, it is high time their mistake should be corrected.

It is perfectly true that the first section of the act fixes 20 per centum *ad valorem* as the lowest rate at which dutiable articles should be admitted after the 30th of June, 1842; but the third section of the act provides that, from and after that day, "duties upon imports shall be laid for the purpose of raising such revenue as may be necessary to an economical administration of the Government;" and also that such duties shall be assessed on the *home valuation*, and *payable in cash*. The leading principles established by the act were, first, that after the 30th of June, 1842, a sufficient revenue should be raised from import duties *alone* to defray the expenses of the Government; secondly, that no more revenue should be so collected than should be demanded by an economical administration of the Government; thirdly, that the best possible guards against frauds on the tariff should be established, by the adoption of the new system of assessing the duties on the *home* instead of the *foreign*

value, and making these duties payable in cash. Whether these duties, from which all the revenue for the support of Government was to be derived, should be fixed at 20 per cent., or at 50 per cent., or any other rate, was of course a subject left for the future consideration and action of Congress, whenever it should be discovered that the minimum rate of 20 per cent., adopted by the first section of the bill, was insufficient for the support of Government. Nothing was further from the intention of those who passed this law than to attempt to prevent future legislation, discriminating with a view to protect home labor, in the contingency of a defect of revenue from duties of 20 per cent. I have ever regarded the tariff passed by the Congress of 1842 as a substantial compliance, in most respects, with this pledge in the compromise act, with this exception only: *that* law, while it levies duties on imports to support the Government, looks to the proceeds of the sales of the public lands as an auxiliary for that purpose; while the compromise act gave, to me, as I thought when I voted for it, and to every other friend of the protective system, at the same time, a solemn assurance that, after the 30th of June, 1842, the land fund should cease to be regarded as a source of revenue, and that all the real wants of the Government should be supplied exclusively from duties on imports, assessed so as to prevent frauds, and payable in cash.

To understand this subject, as it was really understood by those friends with whom I acted in the passage of the compromise act, it is necessary to recur to some other proceedings contemporaneous with it. Mr. Clay's bill to distribute the proceeds of the sales of the public lands among the States, which passed both Houses of Congress about the same time with the compromise itself, was by us regarded as *part and parcel of one great revenue and financial system*, which we desired to establish for the benefit of the whole country. While temporarily surrendering the land fund to the States to which it rightfully belonged, in the judgment of the Congress of 1833, we provided, in the compromise act, that there should be a day fixed at which, in accordance with a suggestion previously made by General Jackson himself, the land fund should forever cease to be regarded as a source of revenue by the General Government. It is true, that we should have acted more wisely, as the event proved, by incorporating the provisions of a distribution bill in the compromise itself. But who could have supposed at that day that President Jackson would have vetoed a bill which carried out his own suggestion? Nevertheless, he defeated that great and salutary measure of distribution by means which no end can ever justify. He refused to return the bill with his objections to the House in which it originated, unquestionably because he had reason to believe that, had he complied with this his constitutional duty, each branch of Congress stood ready, by a vote of two-thirds, to make the bill a law in spite of his veto.

I have said that the tariff of 1842 is in my view a substantial compliance, in most respects, with the principles of the compromise act, and the pledges given in that act on the subject of the regulation of duties from and after the 30th of June, 1842. But it was not a compliance in all respects. In my humble judgment, had the tariff of 1842 been passed strictly in the spirit of the compromise itself, it would have been a better tariff for protection than the law now in force. It would have better guarded the revenue against frauds in the foreign valuation; and it would more effectually have checked excessive importation, which is one of the greatest curses of our country. The distribution of the land fund among the States, contemplated by the compromise, and temporarily provided for by the land bill, would have put an end to the agitation of the question of protection forever; and the principle avowed and sustained by Mr. Clay, that, in laying duties for revenue, discrimination should always be made in favor of protection, as an incident to revenue, would have been *the settled doctrine of the country*.

To show that this opinion is well founded, let us suppose that Congress, on the 30th of June, 1842, had resolved to make a tariff strictly in pursuance of the compromise. The latter directed that, *after that day*, and not until after that day, duties should descend by a rapid reduction, not of 10 per cent., but of *the last half of*

the whole excess above 20 per cent. left after the 31st of December, 1839, and that reduction be to 20 per cent. on the home value of the imports, unless at that time the revenue from that rate of duty should be inadequate to support the administration of the Government. Now, how stood the facts at that day? We had actually incurred a national debt of more than \$20,000,000, at that very time, under the operation of a higher tariff than 20 per cent., and that, too, with the aid of all the land fund, and bank stocks and bank dividends besides. Our revenue had sunk so low, that the credit of the nation was, at that very moment, in the most deplorable condition. We had borrowed on that credit till foreigners would not lend us another dollar; and in our own market, the 6 per cent. certificates of the loan, redeemable in twenty years, could not be sold, to any considerable amount, for any thing like their par value. We had approached the very verge of national bankruptcy; and but for the Whig revolution of 1840, which had elected a Whig Congress to decide our fate, we should at that moment have been in imminent peril of national repudiation. The depressed state of public credit was one of the contingencies anticipated by the friends of Mr. Clay, at the passage of the compromise, and we now *know we were right*. We foresaw that the duties never could descend to 20 per cent., if that pledge to raise the duties to the standard of the wants of the Government, given in the act, should be fulfilled; and our hope, our belief was, that before they *could* descend, by the operation of the law, to 20 per cent., men of all parties, seeing that the Government could not be supported on that principle, would confess old errors, and join with us, under happier auspices, in so adjusting the tariff as that, while the wants of Government would be supplied from import duties, ample protection, as incident to the revenue, would be freely accorded to us without further strife. If, then, Congress had, at that time, raised the duties to the standard then fixed by the compromise, we should have had a tariff which would more effectually have protected home labor than the act of 1842, because, although the duties would have been for revenue, with only *incidental* protection, (the very principle of the act of 1842,) yet those duties, without the aid of other sources of revenue, *would have been still higher than those of 1842*, and their collection far better guarded against frauds.

But the compromise act caused a gradual reduction of duties until the 30th of June, 1842; and the question remains to be answered, "why did the friends of protection to home labor consent to such a reduction, even for a limited period?"

The answer might be a very short one. Under the circumstances in which we were then placed, it was palpable to the minds of those who voted for the compromise, that, unless we accepted that, we should have to submit to the speedy destruction of the whole manufacturing interest. But it is due to the subject, that, in the answer to this question, the circumstances to which I have alluded should be briefly explained. At the time of the passage of this law, the violent opposition of many of our fellow-citizens in the South, and of not a few elsewhere, to the whole protective policy, was unparalleled in the history of this country. South Carolina, by her ordinance of Nullification, had openly defied the General Government, and resolved that no duties should be collected within her limits. It is easy, at this day, after the storm has passed over, to speak of her resistance as a thing which could have been easily crushed by the exhibition of a little firmness. I never doubted, nor do I believe that Mr. Clay or any of his friends ever doubted, that the power of this Government was amply sufficient to enforce for the time the collection of the duties on imports, in despite of all the threatened hostility of South Carolina, and all other enemies of the protective policy. But it is due to truth to say, that at that time South Carolina had many sympathizers, and not a few adherents, in other parts of the country. We were every day in danger of a collision, which might terminate in bloodshed; and, in that event, any man tolerably acquainted with the American character could anticipate, quite as well as I can now describe, the imminent danger of a protracted and bloody contest, which, if it did not endanger the Union, as I firmly believe it would, must have rendered the protect-

ive system hateful to our countrymen, as the exciting cause of a civil war, and incapable of being maintained, except by the butchery of American citizens by American hands. I never did, and do not now, believe that any such system can be long maintained in a Government like ours, if it cannot be upheld without a civil war. The friends of the compromise, in the firm belief that the protective policy was entitled to the confidence and support of the American people, and would grow up and establish itself in their affections, if a violent civil strife could be avoided, desired, of all things, time—time for reason to resume her empire—time for the violent passions of men, then inflamed to the very verge of insanity, to subside; and they consented to a gradual reduction of duties for a limited period, with a view to the ultimate safety of the protective principle itself, as well as to avert the horrors of a civil conflict, and to save the excited and deluded men who were rushing into these extremities from the consequences of their own folly. In the midst of all these considerations, then pressing upon the attention of the friends of protection, there was another staring us in the face, which is too often forgotten or overlooked. At the very commencement of the session of that Congress which passed the act, President Jackson, in his annual message, threw off the cloak of a “judicious” tariff, and openly arrayed the whole power of the Executive against the protective system. Then, for the first time, we heard from him the declaration, that “experience, our best guide on this as on other subjects, made it doubtful whether the advantages of this system are not counterbalanced by many evils, and whether it did not tend to beget, in the minds of a large portion of our countrymen, a spirit of discontent and jealousy *dangerous to the stability of the Union;*” “that a tariff designated for perpetual protection had entered into the minds of but few of our statesmen, and that the most they had anticipated was a temporary protection;” and “that those who took an enlarged view of the condition of our country must be satisfied that the policy of protection must be ultimately limited to those articles of domestic *manufacture* which are indispensable to our safety in time of war.”

These and many other declarations against the existing tariff in the President’s annual message almost instantaneously arrayed the mass of his party against the protective policy throughout the whole country. It required no gifted seer to predict its fate, if some conciliatory measure were not speedily adopted by its friends, to allay the existing excitement. The President’s message against the tariff was communicated to Congress at that session on the 4th of December; and with such expedition did his party in the House of Representatives act on that occasion, in pursuance of his suggestion, that, on the 28th of the same month, the Committee of Ways and Means reported a bill to repeal the existing tariff, and in lieu thereof to collect a revenue of but \$12,500,000 by all imposts on foreign merchandise, the average duty on which, as proposed in the bill, was about 16 per cent., and that to be assessed on the *foreign valuation*. This bill, which has been sometimes called *Mr. Verplanck’s bill*, but which was really a measure emanating from the Executive, was actually far advanced on its passage in the House at the time the compromise was under consideration in the Senate; and its final passage in the House was no longer problematical. It was a measure which, if successful, could not fail to prove an immediate death blow to the whole protective policy. Its passage had been forced through the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union after an ineffectual effort by the friends of American industry to impede its progress; when, on the 23d of February, 1833, the friends of protection in the Senate made the last effort in their power to arrest its downward tendency, and to stay for so long a time as possible the hand which was extended for its destruction. At that critical moment, the question for them to consider was, *not merely how much protection was necessary for home labor, but how much of it could be saved*. The bill in the House, backed as it was by the power of the Executive, and the public sentiment in its favor daily increasing, in consequence of the President’s denunciations of the then existing tariff, might be temporarily arrested by the action of a few Senators; but those very Senators saw that, unless some compromise could be effected while

they retained their slender and very precarious majority in the Senate, the ultimate triumph of the destructive system, and that, too, at no distant day, was inevitable.

Time can never efface my vivid remembrance of the anxious responsibility felt by myself and those who acted with me at that moment. I did not rely upon my own judgment alone, nor upon that of my associates in the Senate, for the course I should adopt. I sought the advice of one who was a citizen of my own State, and who stood at the time at the head of the manufacturing interest of the country—a man whose extensive and minute acquaintance with the whole subject of the tariff was not exceeded by that of any other man in the nation—one who had embarked largely in manufactures himself, and who was deeply interested for other manufactures, and withal one whose exalted character as a man of pure, patriotic, and honest purpose, was unsurpassed. I refer to the late E. I. Du Pont, of the Brandywine. At my solicitation, he came to Washington to advise with me on the subject, and, after fully weighing all the circumstances which surrounded us, anxiously advised me to accept the compromise, and to exert myself to procure its passage. He expressed strong apprehensions that we could not carry the compromise in the face of the rival measure, which offered better terms to the enemies of protection in the House; and when I represented to him that those who had been threatened with a rope by the President would prefer our bill to the bill in the House, on account of the pater- nity of the latter, the possibility that we might for a time arrest the passage of any bill in the Senate, and the deep solicitude felt by the Nullifiers to procure some measure of immediate relief, to save them from the consequences of their own folly, he expressed the highest gratification at the prospect of the passage of the compromise, as the only means left of preserving the principle to the maintenance of which he had devoted a great part of his own useful life. His judgment on the subject confirmed my own opinions; and I owed him while he lived a debt of gratitude for his assistance on that occasion, which, although I never had it in my power to repay, yet have I never failed, either before or since his lamented death, to acknowledge. Thus assured, my feeble aid was freely given to that great measure, which, while it saved the manufacturing interest from sudden and utter destruction, soothed and conciliated the angry passions of men then ready to rush upon revolution and blood- shed, and gave ample time to the friends of the protective policy to rally in its sup- port before the dearest interests of the country could be fatally affected. Any at- tempt to withstand and repel the flood then rushing upon us would have been fruit- less. It was clear that we should be swept away by the torrent. We preferred to divide, to divert, and to retard it. And I then thought, and still think, that the mighty effort of Mr. Clay on that occasion, to save his favorite policy from the danger which threatened it from every quarter, was the most triumphant act of his life.

After a most exciting debate on the merits of the bill, a great part of which was never published, in consequence of the feeling into which our friends had been betray- ed, who had always before that acted together on this subject, the question was taken on the engrossment of the bill on the night of Saturday, the 23d of February, 1833, and it was ordered to a third reading in the Senate by an overwhelming majority. At this stage, we arrested further proceedings in the Senate, in consequence of the constitutional difficulty of *originating* a revenue bill in that body. But we had se- cured our object by thus indicating to the House the measure to which we were disposed to accede. On the Monday following, being the 25th of February, a suc- cessful motion was made in the House to strike out the whole of Mr. Verplanck's bill, and substitute the compromise in lieu of it. The bill thus amended was order- ed to be engrossed for a third reading on the same day, and shortly after became the law of the land.

It is too late now, after the experience the nation has had of General Jackson's influence while President, to pretend that it was not in his power in 1833 to have crushed the protective policy. His party was in the zenith of its power. It had abandoned every principle formerly professed by it, to which *he* had become hos- tile. It had sacrificed every institution and every measure which it had formerly

advocated, as soon as he declared war against it. It is too late to say that he had some friends among the tariff men, who could have influenced his own course. He had friends among the bank men; he had friends among the internal improvement men; and it was mainly by their aid that he was made a prominent candidate in 1824, and actually elected in 1828. Had the friends of the bank, the internal improvement system, and the tariff, foreseen his policy in 1824, he could not possibly have obtained votes enough in the United States to have carried him into the House of Representatives as a candidate for election. His intentions on all these subjects were studiously concealed, pending his election; and when they were finally disclosed, they exhibited that generalship in politics for which he was deservedly distinguished. He killed off the institutions of the country in detail, always selecting the weakest first, destroying that with the aid of the friends of the others, before he ventured to announce any hostility to the latter; and never attacking the strongest until the friends of weaker measures, which had been victimized, became powerless. His first attack was on the internal improvement system; and although it was quite a favorite with most of his Western and Northern supporters, on the day his veto on the Maysville road bill was sent to Congress, yet three weeks afterwards it had scarcely a friend in his party. The little remnant who dared to remonstrate against the veto were immediately proscribed, and turned out of his political church. "*Ucalegon proximus ardet.*" The bank's turn came next. His determined hostility to that was disclosed immediately after he found himself successful in the destruction of the improvement system, and not before. "The General," said his friend, Felix Grundy, one day, to me, "is a sportsman who must always have a cock in the pit." He had tried his apprentice hand on the internal improvements; and although while he was a member of the Senate of the United States he had, by all his votes, carried that system to the most extravagant extent, and won golden opinions by the latitude of his constitutional construction among his dupes in the West, yet he crushed the whole of it so effectually at a single blow, after he became President, that its friends lost all influence with his gigantic party. Emboldened by this success, by the eclat which the enemies of internal improvements bestowed upon him from all quarters, he sought new laurels of the same kind in a new field; and although at no period before his election had he even ventured to whisper his hostility to the bank, although during the whole period of his service in the Senate of the United States, when, if he had harbored any hostility to the bank on the ground of its unconstitutionality or dangerous tendency to our liberties, his oath of fidelity as a Senator ought to have compelled him to disclose it, he never breathed a word against it, yet, as soon as he had got rid of the internal improvements, he declared war against the bank, and effectually crushed that too.

True it is that the Pennsylvania Legislature, by a unanimous vote, had shortly before declared for the bank. Did not his party friends in that body, immediately after hearing the news of the veto, wheel into the party line, and unite in all his denunciations of that institution? True it is that George M. Dallas, the present Democratic candidate for the Vice Presidency, was the FATHER OF THE BANK BILL, was the man intrusted with the memorial of the bank itself, was the chairman of the committee to which that memorial was referred, was the very man who reported the bill, voted for it, and spoke for it, through all its stages. Did he not, with his brother Senator from Pennsylvania, who voted in the same way, turn about within a few days after the veto, and denounce the bank? Who does not remember the predictions at the time of that veto that there would be a great desertion from the President's party, in consequence of that act; and who has forgotten that nearly all of those who talked loudest in his party in favor of the bank were whipped in and became clamorous against it as soon as his veto appeared? He vetoed the bank bill in July, 1832, and, as we have already seen, within six months after that he made war on the tariff. Can any reasonable man doubt what would have been its fate if Henry Clay, with all the affection of a parent for the protective policy, had not rescued it from destruction by the compromise act of the 2d of March,

1833? But for the interposition of Mr. Clay, the passage of the bill reported by the Committee of Ways and Means in the House would, at no very distant day, have been inevitable. What might have been the fate of the Union, I leave others to conjecture. My business is now with the tariff alone; and I confine myself to that.

Henry Clay was at the head of the committee which reported the compromise act. James K. Polk, of Tennessee, his present rival for the Presidency, was at the tail of the Committee of Ways and Means in the House, which reported the bill to which I have referred. To understand Mr. Polk, it is now necessary to understand that bill. Although he was the last-named member on that committee, and in the rear of the column which attacked the tariff, there was no more thorough-going, no more denunciatory enemy of the protective policy than James K. Polk. But let us try him by the bill which he and his colleagues on that committee reported, and by his votes, as they stand recorded on the journals of Congress, against the protective policy. This bill, which will be found to be the 14th document in the volume of Reports of Committees at the 2d session of the 22d Congress, reduces the duties on the 2d March, 1835, as follows—all assessable, be it remembered, *on the foreign valuation*: On *woollens*, to 15 per cent.; on all not exceeding 35 cents the square yard, 5 per cent.; on worsted stuff goods of all kinds, 10 per cent.; on worsted and woollen hosiery, gloves, mitts, bindings, and stockinets, 10 per cent.; on all other cloths, merino shawls, flannels, baizes and cassimeres, carpetings and rugs of all kinds, 20 per cent.; on clothing, ready made, of all descriptions, 20 per cent.; on all *cotton goods*, 20 per cent., except nankins from India, on which Mr. Polk's duty was 15 per cent., and cotton hosiery, gloves, mitts, and stockinets, on which his duty was 10 per cent., as well as upon cotton twist, yarn, and thread; on all manufactures of *flax and hemp*, on sail duck and cotton bagging, 15 per cent.; on all manufactures of tin, japanning, gilt, plated, brass, copper, and pewter, and on saddlery, plated, brass, and polished steel, 20 per cent.; on common saddlery, 10 per cent.; on earthen and stone ware, 20 per cent.; on all side and fire arms, rifles, and muskets, 20 per cent.; on bridle bits and glass ware, 20 per cent.; on manufactures of iron and steel generally, a duty of 20 per cent.; on salt and coal, 5 per cent. On every thing produced by the farmer in the Middle and Northern States, Mr. Polk, who is a cotton grower, recommended in this bill one unvarying standard of only 15 per cent.—15 per cent. on potatoes, 15 per cent. on oats, 15 per cent. on wheat and wheat flour, butter, bacon, beef, and pork.

Such was the character of that bill, from the passage of which Henry Clay saved the country by the adoption of the compromise. Had a tornado passed over all the manufacturing establishments of the country at that time, it would scarcely have proved a greater curse than that measure, which had the earnest support of Mr. James K. Polk, of Tennessee. By reducing the duty on wool to 15 per cent., it put a knife to the throat of every sheep in the country. By a duty of 20 per cent. on ready-made clothing of all descriptions, it struck down a whole class of the most industrious and useful mechanics of the nation. If it had been a bill purposely designed to set fire to the most of the mechanic shops in the country, it would hardly have had a worse effect upon the laboring classes. It would have fed us on potatoes from Ireland; and at those periods when the farmers of the Middle and Northern States were suffering most from the pressure of the times, our bread stuffs would have been grown on the borders of the Baltic and the Black sea, instead of on our own soil. Let the farmers, mechanics, and manufacturers of the country now answer what they think of the new candidate for the Presidency, James K. Polk, of Tennessee?

But I have not yet done with Mr. James K. Polk, of Tennessee, and his bitter hostility to the protective policy. Search the records of Congress, and you will find, that in every instance where the American system was attacked, while he was in Congress, he was its assailant, its constant and uncompromising foe. On the 23d of June, 1832, he voted for the motion of Mr. McDuffie, of South Carolina, to reduce the duty on cotton goods, costing not exceeding 15 cents the square yard, to

12½ per cent. ad valorem. On the same day he voted for Mr. McDuffie's motion to abolish the duty of \$30 per ton on rolled iron. On the previous day he voted to reduce the duty on salt to 5 cents per 56 lbs., and voted against the duties on boots and bootees, on cabinet wares, hats and caps, whips, bridles, saddles, carriages and parts of carriages, blank books, earthen and stone wares, and manufactures of marble, and also against the duty on wool. With this exhibition of the friendship of James K. Polk for the laboring freemen of all classes in this country, I might leave him in their hands. I have not referred to his published speeches on the tariff, which always breathed the most settled hostility to the whole policy. Politicians sometimes speak one way, and vote another. Mr. Van Buren always spoke against the tariff, but generally voted for it. There were several politicians of this school in Congress at the passage of the last tariff. But James K. Polk was never of that school. He was, in deed as well as in word, on all occasions, an enemy to protection for the laborer. I mean to try him by his acts and his votes; and, without going further, I might leave those acts and votes, which I have thus exposed, to the indignant commentaries of the laboring men of all classes, with their friends and employers.

But I propose to do full justice to Mr. Polk on this subject. The people shall not misunderstand the extent of his hostility to the domestic industry of his country. On the 28th day of February, 1834, within one year after the passage of the compromise, Mr. Hall, of North Carolina, in the House of Representatives of the United States, introduced a resolution, the object of which was to procure from the Committee of Ways and Means a report of a plan, accompanied by a bill, to repeal the protection guaranteed by the compromise, under the pretext of immediately reducing the revenue to the necessary expenses of the Government; and James K. Polk, of Tennessee, who was at that time the chairman of that very Committee of Ways and Means, voted for that resolution. There were 69 *yays* in favor of that resolution, and 115 *nays* against it. In voting for this resolution, the deliberate design of which was to violate all the pledges given in the compromise, Mr. Polk was backed by the votes of six of the nine members of that same committee, and by all the Nullifiers and ultra anti-tariff men in the House. This movement shows the dissatisfaction with the compromise cherished at an early period by the enemies of protection. They were sensible that Mr. Clay had triumphed by the salvation of his favorite policy; and the strength of the vote *against* the resolution shows how great that triumph was. But one year previous to the introduction of Mr. Hall's resolution, it would have passed the House by an overwhelming majority. The votes on Mr. Verplanck's bill, at that time, proved that conclusively. But the fact is, that the evil spirit of the storm—the spirit of disunion—which had been raised by Nullification, had been subdued by that master spirit which, for thirty years, had exercised so great an influence in our public councils. That same master spirit had quelled the same demon at the great crisis of the Missouri compromise. On both occasions, Henry Clay saved the Union; and, in the judgment of many, on each of them he saved the Union at its last gasp.

But the vote of James K. Polk and his allies, in the war on domestic industry, was not the first exhibition of their spleen and hostility to the compromise. Within six weeks after the passage of the act, the Executive of the United States began to violate its true spirit and its legitimate construction, for the purpose of breaking down our American policy. On the 20th of April, 1833, the Secretary of the Treasury under President Jackson issued his famous Treasury circular to all the officers of the customs in the United States. That circular contained an Executive decree abrogating all the specific duties and the whole system of *minimums* in the existing tariff laws. Under a pretext as foreign from the views of all the men with whom I acted in the passage of that law as any thing the most remote, this arbitrary edict declared, without one syllable in the act to support it, that it was our intention, in passing it, to repeal these specific duties and minimums. It is scarcely possible that any human being could have been so ignorant as not to know that a

specific duty could, at any time, be as well ascertained as an *ad valorem* duty, and that these duties were convertible. By the compromise we simply provided that all existing duties, whether specific or *ad valorem*, should be reduced according to a fixed ratio. This outrage on the law, which, because the Executive, whose province it was to collect the duties, had perpetrated it, was utterly without remedy, proved of great injury to all those manufactures which depended for protection upon the minimums and specific duties. The injury inflicted on the manufacturing interest did not admit of legal redress; for the friends of protection could not by any possibility bring the question before any judicial tribunal, while the Executive officers refused to sue for or collect the duties in pursuance of their instructions. Nothing remained for us to do but to submit in silence, until the returning sense of justice of the country should induce the people to drive the enemies of domestic industry from the high places of the Republic.

And here let me pause for the purpose of entreating every friend of home labor, who has ever thought of voting for James K. Polk as President of the United States, to take warning by the example which I have now set before him. If there be such a man, let him not lay the flattering unction to his soul that he can save his favorite policy, while the Executive of the United States, with the officers of the customs appointed by him, is hostile to that policy. They have the collection of the duties for protection; and he who would commit the lamb to the custody of the wolf, will justly suffer for his own folly.

Before I have done with this subject, I ought to mention, in this connexion, what I think is another strong evidence of the hostility of James K. Polk and his political associates to the protective principles of the compromise act. Although they continued in power from the passage of that law until the year 1841, *they never attempted*, in a single instance, *to provide*, either by prospective legislation or by any Executive regulation, *for any mode of assessing duties on the home valuation*. nor did they attempt to pass a law raising the duties, prospectively, after the 30th of June, 1842, to the real wants of the Government, although they knew, as well through the whole session of Congress of 1840-'41 as we now know, that one or both of these measures ought to be prospectively adopted, to save the Government from the danger of bankruptcy. The principle of the home valuation was a *sine qua non*, at the time of the passage of the act, with many of those who, like myself, voted for it for the purpose, avowed by me at the time, of saving the protective policy. We considered that a vote for the duties fixed by the act, to be assessed on this principle, was, essentially, to all intents and purposes, a vote for *protection*; and we determined, therefore, to compel Mr. Calhoun and his peculiar friends in the Senate to record their votes, in the most unequivocal form, on the journal, in favor of that principle. And here I cannot help complaining of the conduct of Mr. Calhoun, after the passage of this law, and especially after the period when most of us, friendly to the protective policy, who had voted with him for its passage, had left the Senate of the United States. How well his conduct comported with that feeling which became a man who had received at our hands a shelter from the storm which threatened to annihilate him, I leave for him and others who are in the same category to determine. To explain his conduct, I must refer to a few facts.

While the motion was pending to amend the bill, by directing the assessment of the duties on the home value, a debate sprung up, in the course of which Mr. Calhoun repeatedly argued that the amendment was unconstitutional, and declared that it was impossible for him to vote for it. A number of tariff Senators, friendly to the compromise act, with whom I was acting in concert, including, among others, Samuel Bell, of New Hampshire, A. Naudain, of Delaware, Samuel A. Foot, of Connecticut, and John Holmes, of Maine, had resolved to compel all the anti-protectionists in the Senate to vote for that amendment, in every stage of its passage, or to defeat the bill by laying it on the table. We foresaw all the objections which have been since made to the adoption of that mode of preventing evasions of the

law and frauds on the revenue, and we knew that the amendment necessarily carried with it protection to American industry. It was an unpleasant prescription for Mr. Calhoun, but it was not ill adapted to the peculiar disease under which he labored. After he had frequently announced his unalterable determination to vote against the amendment, which he as often said it would be a violation of the Constitution, and against his conscience, to support, a motion was made, and by myself, to lay the whole bill on the table; and, on the part of my friends, I avowed our determination not to suffer it to be called up again during the session. At the request of a nullifying Senator, I withdrew that motion, to give himself and his friends time to reflect further; but, at the same time, they were distinctly given to understand that, unless they agreed to vote for the amendment, at every stage of its passage, the motion should be renewed, and the bill nailed to the table, in which event they must fight it out with the General Government. Those who are curious to consult the debates in Congress at that day will see, by recurring to them, that, on the next day, when the bill was taken up again, every man among them, every enemy of the tariff in the Senate, including the Hon. John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina, *voted for the amendment*. His vote for the home valuation stands recorded on the journals of the Senate, at every stage of the passage of the bill; and he contented himself at the time, as he declared, during the passage of the tariff of 1842, (when this vote was invoked in judgment against him by a tariff Senator,) by saying that he *voted for it under an oral protest*. It is true that promises made under the fear of death are not binding in law; but it would be utterly inadmissible to suppose that Mr. Calhoun acted under duress, and it would be equally inadmissible to suppose that his vote was given with a view to procure the votes of others, then necessary for his own safety, because such a vote would have been a palpable fraud upon them, if, at the time, he meditated an evasion of the pledge given in the amendment.

Two days after the approval of this bill Congress adjourned; and in less than three months we learned, to our perfect astonishment, from the public prints, that Mr. Calhoun was, in South Carolina, exulting among his followers on account of what he called his *triumph over HENRY CLAY!* In the session of 1839 he even went so far as to tell Mr. Clay, on the floor of the Senate, that at the passage of the compromise, he was his master! It is true that Mr. Clay reprovved the folly of this arrogance, and even told him "that he would not own him for a slave." But those who forced him into the position I have described had then left the Senate, and the swaggering of Mr. Calhoun was not rebuked by them. I finish this sketch by simply stating the fact that Mr. Calhoun is now understood to be a friend to the election of James K. Polk, the peculiar friend of General Jackson, who, in 1833, threatened to hang him as high as Haman, and that Mr. C. is also the uncompromising enemy of Henry Clay.

It may be thought due to the occasion, that, as I have touched upon the principles of all the other candidates, I should devote a few moments to the consideration of the principles of Mr. Dallas. If the *modern* Democrats are satisfied with his votes in the Senate, I do not see why *we* should complain of them. He was the *father* of the bill to recharter the Bank of the United States, which fell by President Jackson's veto. He voted for the bill to distribute the proceeds of the sales of the public lands among the States on all occasions within my knowledge. And he professed to be so strong a friend to *protection* and the tariff policy, that he made a speech against the compromise, because it reduced duties, and voted against it, on its passage, for the avowed reason that there was not enough protection in it for *him*. He stood alone by the side of a distinguished tariff Senator in the debate against the compromise, thus appearing not willing to yield any thing to save the peace of the country. One Southern Democratic Senator spoke against the bill, and was burnt in effigy by some of his constituents for so doing, although he actually voted for it. I hope Mr. Dallas may now share a better fate among his Democratic constituents in the same region. It is due to him to say, that we now understand that he has changed his principles on all these great measures, and that some

of his friends insist that he is as hostile to protection in every shape as James K. Polk himself.

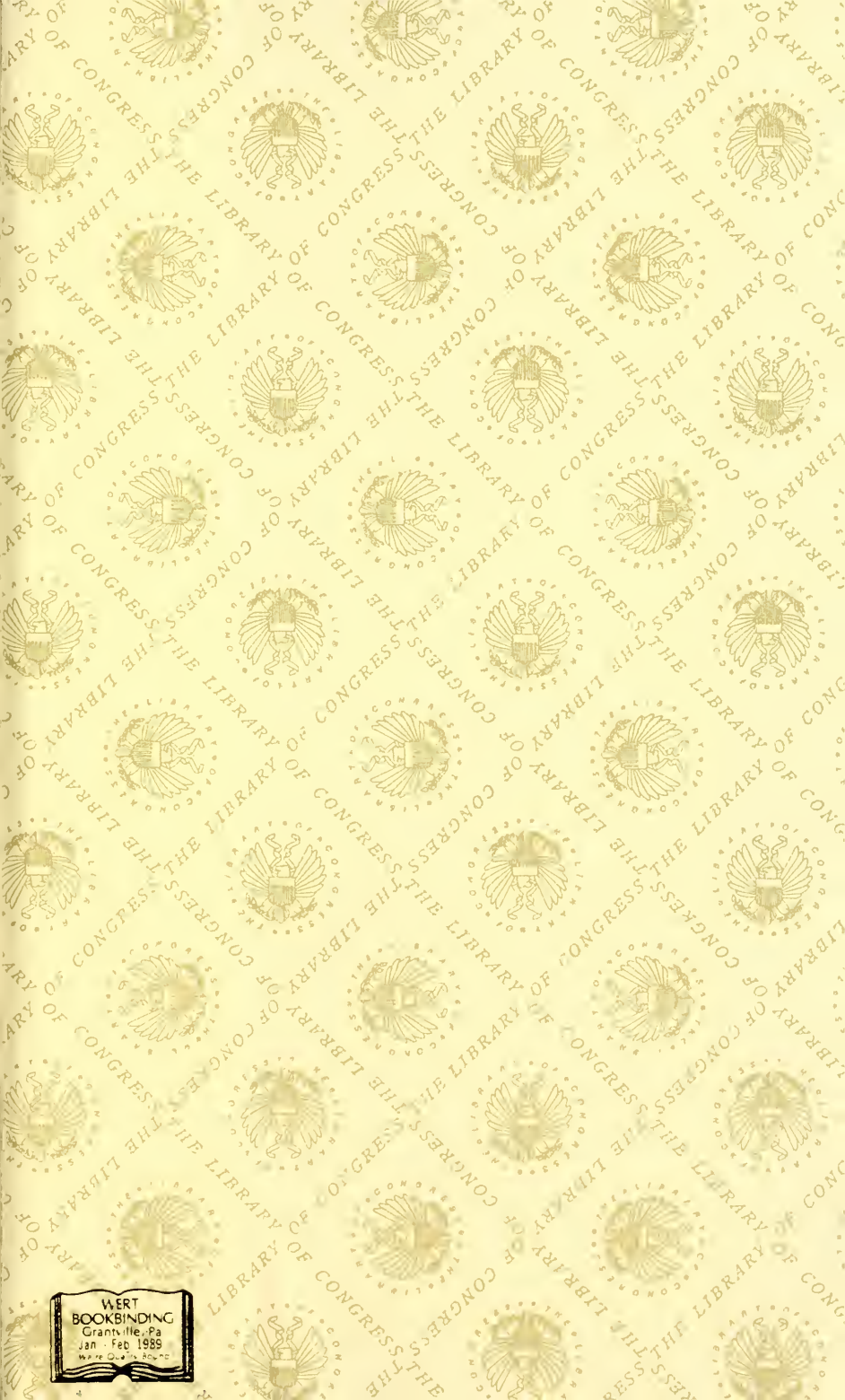
But Henry Clay has never changed; and his exertions in the public councils, aided by his instructive eloquence, have done more for the cause of the laboring classes in this nation, and have made more proselytes to the doctrines of the protective policy, than all the efforts of any other man in the country. At the time he commenced his labors in Congress to build up the American system, most of the young men of the nation were educated in the free-trade doctrines of Adam Smith, and the visionary theories of others like him, whose knowledge of political economy was obtained in the closet instead of the council chamber. I was one of those who had imbibed these opinions; and if, for the last twenty years, I have been the steady friend of protecting American interests against foreign competition, it has been mainly owing to the conviction produced on my mind by the perusal of those masterly specimens of argument and eloquence with which he sustained his favorite policy in the halls of the Capitol of our country.

I have trespassed too long, fellow-citizens, upon your patience; but allow me, in conclusion, by every consideration of what is due to the honor and interest of your country, by every feeling which ought to warm and animate your hearts as American citizens, anxious for the protection of your own industry and the welfare of all the laboring classes among us, to entreat you not to overlook the true issue, to be decided in November next, between Henry Clay, of Kentucky, and James K. Polk, of Tennessee. It is not a question between men merely; it is not a question about honors and offices, and the rewards of partisan service; it is not a question about the payment of the State debts, or the acquisition of foreign territory; it is, as I have said already, emphatically a question of BREAD—a question whether we shall sink the mass of the laboring freemen of this country, who now gain their bread by the sweat of their brows, to the level of the European paupers, who labor for six pence a day, and find themselves. It is an axiom of eternal truth in politics, that a nation completely impoverished will soon be a nation completely enslaved. If, by the abandonment of protection to home labor, we reduce half a million of voters at our elections to a condition of as servile dependence and as abject poverty as our Southern slaves, how long can we rationally expect to remain a nation of freemen? More than a hundred and forty years ago the treaty of Methuen, which was one of the principal causes of the beggary and want of Portugal, reduced her to the condition of a dependency of England, struck down her national spirit, and enslaved her people. By that treaty she abandoned all right to protect her own industry, and agreed to admit British woollen goods of all kinds without duty or restriction. Nineteen hundred years ago, when Rome had conquered the principal part of the world, and freely admitted supplies from Lybia and Egypt into Italy, the industry of her own citizens was paralyzed by the withdrawal of that protection to which it was fairly entitled, poverty and want reigned where plenty had prevailed, and a race of men, the bravest and the finest that ever lived, were speedily converted into the subjects of a despot. And so keenly did Tacitus, one of the gravest and most philosophical of her historians, feel the degradation of supplying her legions from the industry of foreign countries, that he has announced with an *oath* of vexation and disgust that deplorable change in her condition.* Let us take warning from the examples of other nations. Let us guard and protect the real, not merely the nominal independence of our country. The ever fervent aspirations from every true American heart will be, for the preservation of that independence, "*Esto perpetua*"—"MAY IT BE EVERLASTING!"

* The following is the passage referred to:

"At HERCULE olim ex Italia legionibus longinquas in provinciis commeatus portabantur nec nunc infecunditate laboratur; sed Africam potius et Egyptum exerceamus, navibusque et casibus vita populi Romani permissa est!—TACITUS, *Annal* xii, 43





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